

# East Hartford couple opens home to children with medical needs

**By Nicole Guzzardi**

For the Journal Inquirer

**EAST HARTFORD** — The Department of Children and Families always is looking for loving homes for children in need, and one local family has stepped up to provide a place for three children — all with their own special needs.

“Hope” is not just what this mother gives to her children, it also happens to be her first name.

Hope Feliciano, and her husband, Cesar, adopted three children through DCF, adding to a brood that includes their own children — Austin, 21, Aaron, 19, and Ashlee, 17 — making the count six.

Each of the adopted children — Antonio, 7, Aubree, 3, and Alana Kay, 2 — has medical conditions that require special care.

The Felicianos of East Hartford

have been trained in the specific medical knowledge to handle the children’s constant care and also undergo continuous training to stay updated on the frequently changing needs of their children.

The couple took in each child as an infant and foster cared for them before they adopted them. The adoption process can be a lengthy one, but it is well worth it, Hope said.

Antonio suffers from gastrointestinal problems, severe asthma, and pulmonary problems, and “because Antonio is frequently sick, I started homeschooling him this year,” Hope said.

Aubree was born with a defect that was fixed at birth, yet she suffers from gastrointestinal problems and right now must be fed supplementally, Hope said.

The youngest child, Alana Kay, was born with a defect called gas-

troschisis, Hope said, explaining that Alana Kay has suffered from a variety of serious problems since birth and on April 19 underwent a serious bowel transplant surgery.

The surgery was performed at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, one of the only facilities in the country that performs the procedure on babies.

“The procedure was successful, but Alana will be on anti-rejection medicine for the rest of her life,” Hope said.

Throughout all the medical issues, the Felicianos are there every step of the way, Jackie Ruot, a DCF worker and Alana’s nurse before the adoption, said.

Hope calls Ruot and keeps her up to date on Alana’s condition.

“I am very impressed. Never in my career have I seen anything to the extent of this family, caring for this baby the way they do,” Ruot said.

Hope and Cesar have a Web site

for Alana Kay so friends and loved ones can stay updated on her condition. To visit, go to

[www.caringbridge.org/visit/alana\\_kay](http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/alana_kay)

“Taking a child in is something that has to be from the heart,” Hope said.

“I remember watching Alana Kay wake up in the hospital startled not knowing where she was, and after seeing Hope’s face, closing her eyes and falling peacefully back to sleep,” Ruot said.

What this family has done is amazing and DCF always is in need of families to take in children, DCF worker Lisa Flower said.

“We are especially always needing homes for children with medical needs, sibling groups, and adolescents,” Flower said.